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THE BRITISH ACADEMY

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Metaphysic of Mr. F. H. Bradley

By

Hastings Rashdall

Fellow of the Academy

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# THE METAPHYSIC OF MR. F. H. BRADLEY

By HASTINGS RASHDALL

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

*Read June 5, 1912*

THE critical period for great literary reputations is the generation after that for which the authors wrote or by which they were first appreciated. The generalization holds as much in regard to professional Philosophy as in more popular branches of literature—only that with philosophical reputations the generations are short and succeed each other with great rapidity. In Philosophy the craving for something new is even keener than in literature; a Philosophy that has to any extent become official soon becomes an object of suspicion to the questioning spirits. The philosophical reputation of Mr. Bradley has, it would appear, reached this stage. His is no longer the last word in Philosophy. He has outlived the period in which young and enthusiastic disciples were disposed to set down all the philosophies that preceded his, except the great philosophical classics, as matters of merely historical interest. It is not yet certain that he will be treated as himself belonging to those classics. That period can hardly be reached till his reputation has spread beyond the limits of the English-speaking world, for in England the road to eminence is to be talked about in other countries; and English philosophical reputations are slow to attract the attention of continental thinkers. This process has only just begun in the case of Mr. Bradley. Meanwhile there is a danger that the importance of his works should be unduly overshadowed by that of writers who have succeeded in administering more recent and still more sensational shocks to traditional modes of thought. That danger is all the greater since Mr. Bradley's reputation was always an esoteric one. It has never reached the greater public—even the public of highly cultivated persons outside the circle of those who have at least studied Philosophy a little in their youth: while the philosophies which are now absorbing most attention even among professional students of the subject are philosophies which—whether that be regarded as a merit or a defect—are particularly adapted to attract to themselves

a measure of attention in the world of religious thought and of general literature. I hope the present moment will not be an unfavourable one for attempting an impartial examination of Mr. Bradley's metaphysical position.

As this paper will be chiefly critical, I should like to begin by saying that I am one of those who do place Mr. Bradley among the classics of Philosophy. When *Appearance and Reality* came out, Dr. Edward Caird said that it was the greatest thing since Kant. I should like respectfully to subscribe that dictum at least in the form 'there has been nothing greater since Kant'. It is not likely, indeed, that Mr. Bradley's actual reputation will ever place him quite in this position. The greatest and most enduring philosophical reputations will always be those of men who have not merely offered a new solution of the technical problems of Philosophy but have expounded some new and characteristic attitude towards life. Mr. Bradley—apart from a few *obiter dicta* which in all spheres except the religious are for the most part of an extremely conservative cast—has touched little on practical questions. Perhaps therefore his writings will never become quite as classical as they deserve to be. But just because I regard Mr. Bradley as a classic, I shall venture to handle him with the freedom which we all employ towards the great names of Philosophy. One is almost tempted to say that the greatest thinkers are just those who have made the greatest mistakes. We are all agreed that there are huge inconsistencies in Kant: much the same thing is beginning at least to be whispered about Hegel; and yet we do not cease to regard Kant or even Hegel as great men. I trust therefore that, if I venture to point out similar inconsistencies in Mr. Bradley, I shall not be supposed to be wanting in respectful admiration for his work. I need not say that it is only in the most inadequate way that in such a paper as this I can attempt an examination even of one or two central points in his elaborate construction—if the word can be applied to a system which is so much more destructive than constructive. A full examination of *Appearance and Reality* would demand a work at least as long.

If criticism must be brief, exposition must be briefer. And yet, even before an audience whose adequate acquaintance with the book may be pre-supposed, I can hardly begin to criticize without some slight attempt to state the positions I am attacking—if only for the purpose of indicating incidentally what are the elements of Mr. Bradley's thought which I regard as constituting his real philosophical importance.

MS X *Appearance and Reality* may be described as the work of an

inquirer in search of Reality. The first and most obvious suggestion which would occur to the plain man in search of the real is 'Things are real'. An examination of what we mean by things shows that no *thing*, taken by itself, can be real. I need not recapitulate the ordinary idealistic argument by which it is shown that all that we mean by a thing is unintelligible apart from Mind. Secondary qualities are obviously constituted by feeling or perception, or by a content which is ultimately derivable from perception. Even 'Common-sense' does not suppose that things would be coloured if there was no one to see them, or scented if there were no one to smell them. Primary qualities are equally relative to Mind: for extension, taken apart from something which is extended, is a mere abstraction; and that something which is extended is always something given in immediate perception. In a world in which there were no perception and no percipients, there would be nothing to be extended. The force and clearness with which Mr. Bradley has insisted upon this point, constitutes the most original feature in his re-statement of the case for Idealism. Moreover, when we do make the abstraction of extension from the extended, we find that extension so considered consists in relations, and relations by themselves are unintelligible without qualities. Here Mr. Bradley cannot quite use the argument, commonly employed by Idealists, that, while relations—at least the particular relations which enter into the constitution of space and of things in space—are nothing apart from a mind that apprehends the relation, they become fully intelligible when looked at in their due connexion with Mind: for according to him the relation between relations and that which is related is ultimately unintelligible. But at all events the fact that spacial relations cannot be thought of as existing by themselves is enough to show that neither the spacial relations themselves nor things in space can be the reality of which we are in search; for relations imply qualities, and the qualities have been shown to exist only for mind.

I will return to Mr. Bradley's peculiar view about the unintelligibility of relations hereafter. As to his general polemic against the notion that matter is real, I need not dwell further upon a line of argument which Mr. Bradley shares with all Idealists. I will only say, in view of recent revivals of the naïvest form of what we used to have the audacity to call naïve Realism, that to me one great value of Mr. Bradley's teaching consists in this—that he is the most thoroughly convinced and the most convincing, I venture to think the most irrefutable, of Idealists. In Mr. Bradley we have an Idealist who is not afraid or ashamed of Idealism. Mr. Bradley is not

a 'soft Idealist' who, after disposing of Materialism by arguments borrowed from Berkeley or Kant, suddenly, when faced with the difficulties of his own position and its antagonism to so-called Common-sense, turns round and condemns under the name of 'subjective Idealism' the inevitable inference 'if nature does not exist apart from Mind, then nothing really exists but Mind and what is for mind'. Mr. Bradley is a genuine, hard, impenitent Idealist, who over and over again asserts as his fundamental formula 'There is but one Reality, and its being consists in experience'.<sup>1</sup> Experience, be it observed, not (with Berkeley) 'ideas', used practically in the sense of feelings, or (with Hegel) mere 'thought'. Mr. Bradley recognizes that all thought involves abstraction—abstraction from an experience which always is, or includes, feeling. He further differentiates himself from much traditional Hegelianism by recognizing the existence of a distinct side of human experience called 'willing' which can, quite as little as feeling, be reduced to a mere kind of thinking, unless thinking is to be used in a completely non-natural sense which leaves us without a word to denote what ordinary people call thinking. Hence Mr. Bradley's preference for the most comprehensive term that we can possibly apply to conscious life—experience. It turns out then as the result of examination that matter, as we know it, can always be analysed away into a form of conscious experience. Consequently matter, understood as a thing existing apart from mind, cannot be real.

But if matter be not real, because in ultimate analysis it turns out to be a mere accident of mind, why should not mind itself be the reality of which we are in search? By mind let us first understand the individual human self as we know it. It is obvious that such a self cannot be the real in the sense of the only reality: for such selves have a beginning, and only a small part of the world which Science reveals to us enters into the actual experience of any particular self; and when it does enter into it, it enters it in a way which implies that such entrance into an individual experience does not constitute the sole existence that the world can claim. We are bound to infer that things existed before we were born; the continual advance of our knowledge implies that there must be some existent things of which no human self has at present the smallest suspicion, and so on. But Mr. Bradley is not content with asserting that neither any individual self nor all the selves put together are the Reality. He will not admit that they are real at all, or any part of the Reality. And here it becomes necessary to allude to a peculiar feature of Mr. Bradley's nomenclature or

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 455. Cf. pp. 146-7.



rather, we ought to say, of his thought. His conception of 'the real' is that it is that which is not in relation—that which is what it is wholly in and by itself, so that nothing outside it is necessary to maintain or to complete its being.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the statement is varied by saying that 'the real is individual',<sup>2</sup> or (what will seem to most of us to introduce a wholly heterogeneous and a purely ethical conception) the real is 'the perfect'.<sup>3</sup> This will strike most people on the face of it as a very arbitrary conception of the real. Mr. Bradley, in fact, begins by assuming that in saying something is real we mean that is the whole of Reality. This position rests upon the further allegation—that the real cannot contradict itself; Non-contradiction is the test of reality;<sup>4</sup> and relation always does involve contradiction. But before examining Mr. Bradley's proof of this startling position, I must briefly trace its consequences.

If to be out of relation is the essence of Reality, it is clear that the individual self cannot be real. For if the object of knowledge cannot be regarded as real apart from the subject, equally little can we find in the subject taken apart from the object an entity which owes nothing of its being to its relations to any other being. The self always reveals itself to us in the act of thinking something, and it distinguishes itself from that something. Moreover, the self is not only made what it is by relation to the object, but by relation to other selves. We have failed to find the reality that we want in the self—taken in any of the numerous senses in which the term self may be and actually is used. But can we not find such a reality in a self free from the limitations of the self as we know it—such a Self as the God of theistic Religion is supposed to be. To such a position Mr. Bradley objects that such a Mind must still be conceived of as related to the objects of His own knowledge whether these objects are looked upon simply as inevitable objects of thought existing in and for Him but independently of His Will, or whether they are treated as caused or created by the Mind which knows them. And then, moreover, according to the ordinary theistic conception the other selves—of men and animals—are regarded as being outside this divine Mind, and so related to that Mind: and yet those relations necessarily form part of the nature of the divine Mind itself. Once again we have relation: and so not Reality.

We might seem to reach a more tenable position if we adopted—if not *the* Hegelian position—at least one version of that position very common among Hegelians, and say that the divine Mind must be thought of as including all other minds, and also as including the

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* pp. 129, 136-7, 140-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* pp. 243-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* p. 136.

*What Bradley means by the real is individual of Religion. The real is individual of Religion. The real is individual of Religion. The real is individual of Religion.*

objects of its knowledge. We might then suppose that the All is real, that in the one comprehensive Mind or Spirit which includes, and is, all other and lesser minds we have found the one sole, absolute Reality. But this will not satisfy Mr. Bradley's demand for unrelatedness. For, though we have got rid of external relations, we have not got rid of internal relations. So long as we think of the All as a whole consisting of parts—including within itself subject + object, this self + that self, or even this self as within or a part of that self, we are still conceiving of our reality as made up of interrelated parts or elements: and to be involved in relation is, according to his definition, to be unreal. Nothing can be real but the whole; and even the whole is not real, so long as it is considered as a whole, a collection, a plurality of parts.

Are we then frankly to admit that Reality does not exist at all? That would be unthinkable and even self-contradictory. In calling some things unreal or appearance, we imply that there must be a Real with which such unrealities can be contrasted. Appearance is only intelligible as an appearance of the Real. To think of some thing as *merely* an appearance is to think of it as ultimately adjectival: and the adjective implies a substantive. If there were no reality, there could be no appearance: of the appearances we are immediately conscious; and their existence as appearances is consequently undeniable. Hence we must say, not that the All or the Whole as such is the real, but that the real is that which underlies all appearances, which is revealed more or less adequately, more or less inadequately, in all appearance. It is the whole only if we think of the whole as including the parts otherwise than by way of relation, as a whole which swallows up the parts so completely that all relation disappears, and they cease to be even parts. Knowledge of this Reality—this Absolute, as Mr. Bradley delights to call it—we can never obtain, for to know the Absolute at once implies that distinction between knower and known which cannot belong to the real. To know the Absolute I should have to *be* the Absolute. And even then I could not know myself, for even in self-knowledge a relation breaks out again—the fatal Dualism which we want to get rid of; the distinction between knower and known, between part and whole, which implies a relation between them.

This thesis—that Reality cannot be fully known or thought—is further defended by an elaborate attempt to show that all the categories of our thought imply incoherences or contradictions, inconsistencies which we cannot suppose to belong to Reality. This in fact is the topic with which the greater part of the book is occupied. I must

be content with noticing only one or two counts in this indictment against knowledge.

(1) In the first place all knowing, as *we* know—all judging—implies abstracting. It consists in the application of abstract universals to a logical subject. Yet this abstract universal does not as such exist except in my head. The 'green in general' which I predicate of the grass is a green which no eye has ever seen. Nobody ever saw a 'green in general'—which was neither light-green nor dark-green, neither bright nor dull, neither distinct nor indistinct. In immediate perception I am, indeed, in close and immediate contact with Reality, but the moment I begin to think, I in a sense get away from Reality, for I begin making abstract universals which leave out so much of the actual fact as it is in perception. And yet all Science implies this getting away from Reality, this dealing with abstract universals. In knowledge we are as it were dealing with counters which are in a sense fictions—though they stand for, and are exchangeable with and facilitate our relations with actual Reality. And yet on the other hand so long as we merely feel and do not think, we have no knowledge. In actual perception the disruption between subject and predicate has not yet taken place. All predication consists in putting asunder what Reality has conjoined. From the nature of the case, therefore, Reality cannot be fully known: and, wherever we do not know fully, we are always liable to error—we do not and cannot know how much error. Hence we are involved in this dilemma. If we knew the Absolute, what we knew could not be real just because it is the object of knowledge: in proportion as our experience becomes more real, the further it gets away from knowledge. ¶ The nearer to Reality, the further from truth: the more truth, the less Reality. Truth, in other words, cannot be perfectly true: if it were perfectly true, it would no longer be truth. Reality can never be known: directly it becomes known, it is no longer Reality.

(2) The most fundamental of all Mr. Bradley's alleged self-contradictions in our knowledge is connected with the category of Relation. It is, as I have already said, upon the allegation that the relative is the self-contradictory that his whole theory of the absolute Reality turns. All our knowledge is found on analysis to consist of feeling, or a content derived from feeling, and relation. We never have the one without the other—feelings without relation or relations without feeling. Each is unintelligible without the other: and yet the relation between them is itself unintelligible. Directly we try to think of the relation between the relation and that which is related, we find that it implies a further relation between them—which gives rise to the

problem, what is the relation between this relation and the relation between the relation and the related, and so on *ad infinitum*. The category of Relation involves a *regressus ad infinitum*, which cannot be thought of as belonging to Reality. Our thought, all thought as such, is therefore for ever incapable of getting itself into contact with the real world as it is.

(3) The other categories of our thought—cause and effect, substance and accident, quantity and quality—are likewise examined and found to be honeycombed with contradictions. Most of these I cannot go into. I must, however, touch upon one point—Mr. Bradley's attitude to the time-difficulty. All our thoughts about Nature imply time: the categories of Cause and Effect, of Substance or Accident, all that is implied by mechanism or by organism, is meaningless without it. Even our thinking itself has duration. Consequently Mr. Bradley cannot adopt the easy way out of the difficulty according to which the self for which time-distinctions exist is itself 'out of time'. And yet the well-known Kantian antinomy—the difficulty of admitting either a first event or an endless series—remains unresolved. Mr. Bradley has added difficulties of his own. That which is in time cannot satisfy his criterion of reality, for it is ever passing away into something else, implies something else; in short, it is related, and therefore is not real. That which becomes is and is not. Its very being involves contradiction. The Absolute therefore must be out of time: time-distinctions must be somehow transcended in the Absolute. But Mr. Bradley frankly admits, as has not always been done by those who adopt such a position, that he does not in the least know of any kind of being which is out of time, and can attach no definite meaning to the language which he is compelled to use. The time-difficulty constitutes, therefore, one additional obstacle in the way of knowing Reality as it is, and in particular it is fatal to any attempt to discover the real or the Absolute in a self (as we understand self-hood), or any plurality of selves, for these are in time.

(4) I will not dwell on the ethical side of Mr. Bradley's doctrine, for it would lead us far from our subject, and I have dealt with it at length elsewhere. I will only say that in the contrast between the ideal of Self-development and the ideal of Self-sacrifice we are presented once more with that element of contradiction which penetrates all our knowledge. Thus Morality has to go the way of knowledge. Morality is self-contradictory, and therefore appearance only—not Reality or belonging to the Real except as inconsistent or self-contradictory appearances belong to the Real. We are therefore precluded from finding (with Kant) in the Practical Reason a new world, as it

were, which is to redress the balance of the old—a practical truth which will serve humanity as a substitute for the speculative truth which the limitations of our Reason have rendered impossible for us. In the Absolute, Mr. Bradley assures us—on what grounds he has omitted to explain except in so far as it constitutes part of his arbitrary definition of ‘the real’—all must be perfectly harmonious (the word here appears to be used in an ethical, and not a logical sense), and therefore must be very good. Our moral consciousness which pronounces that some things are very bad must therefore be a one-sided appearance. This apparent evil must in reality only add to the perfection and harmony of the whole. Our good and evil are only one-sided and contradictory appearances of a super-moral Absolute.

So far Mr. Bradley’s argument might be said to have landed us in a position of pure Agnosticism—profounder than any ever dreamed of by Herbert Spencer and his kind. For Spencer’s position was simply ‘We do not, and cannot know’ the Absolute. Mr. Bradley’s is ‘No being can know the Absolute, not even Himself or (as he prefers to say) itself’. Mr. Spencer’s position is ‘We cannot get at absolute truth’: Mr. Bradley’s is ‘there is no such thing as absolute truth; all truth is and must be partially false’. But there is another side to Mr. Bradley’s position, by which he goes near to reducing his most violent paradoxes to something very like platitude. Truth cannot be wholly true, and can never fully express the nature of reality: but not all truth is equally false. There are degrees of truth and degrees of Reality. Matter is not absolutely real, but it is not a mere delusion: the ideas of common life and of Science about Matter, though not absolutely true, contain a great deal of truth. Science is nearer to Reality than mere Common-sense. We approach still nearer the absolute truth of things when we adopt the Idealist’s point of view, and look at matter in its due relation to mind. The Idealist is right in thinking the self more real than matter. The conception of God—as conceived of by Religion or Philosophy—brings us still nearer to the absolute Reality, for it represents an attempt to think of things as a whole. And in the whole there is more Reality than in the part. But still even the whole, considered as a whole, cannot be thought of as absolutely real, for the reasons already mentioned. The knowledge of common life, Science, Religion, Philosophy, represent stages or levels of knowledge, each of which brings us nearer absolute truth and absolute Reality than the one below it, though the goal which we are in search of is one which we can never actually reach: for the goal of absolute knowledge is one which would melt away for us in the very act of our reaching it. Absolute truth, if

attained, would be no longer truth but Reality. Reality fully known would no longer be Reality.

How shall we examine this marvellous intellectual fabric? I think I can best do so by attempting to show that it involves a fundamental contradiction and inconsistency. That is, indeed, a difficult position to take up against Mr. Bradley: for the more contradictions one points out in knowledge—even in that latest and highest product of human knowledge constituted by Mr. Bradley's own system—the more his theory seems to be confirmed. You point out contradictions; he replies, 'I told you so: the contradictions are necessary, and only prove my case—that all our knowledge involves contradictions, and that is just what I assert.' Perhaps the best way of dealing with this position will be then to assume provisionally that Mr. Bradley is right, and ask ourselves only whether he has brought us as near to the truth about Reality as any system can do. For, though Mr. Bradley holds that contradictions in human knowledge are inevitable, he does not positively assert that contradictions are a mark of truth, such truth as it is possible for the human mind to obtain. He admits that we must provisionally assume the law of contradiction, and the other laws or categories of human thought, and that at all events unnecessary and avoidable contradiction is a mark not merely of that limitation and consequent error to which all human thought is doomed, but of avoidable error. I will ask then whether Mr. Bradley has in his ultimate *Weltanschauung* avoided such contradictions.

I will venture to say at once that there seems to me to be in Mr. Bradley's system a fundamental and irreconcilable contradiction between three sharply opposed points of view. They may be conveniently described as (1) Idealism, (2) Spinozism, (3) Phenomenalism.

The side of Mr. Bradley's thought which meets us first is Idealism; and this, I would venture to say, constitutes the truest of those numerous selves which, in accordance with Mr. Bradley's own teaching, I shall take the liberty to attribute to him. 'Sentient experience is reality and what is not this is not real,' 'the real is nothing but experience,' 'everything is experience': there we have the voice of the genuine Idealist. But, when we are told to think of all the kinds of conscious experience known to us as merely adjectives of a substance which we do not know, when this substance is spoken of as transcending the distinction between the thinker and the objects of his thought, above all when we are invited to apply the neuter pronoun to this substance instead of the masculine, then I submit that Mr. Bradley has entered upon the line of thought which conducts to Spinozism. It is true that

he does actually avoid Spinoza's conclusion; for, though he speaks of the Absolute as transcending the distinction between subject and object, between thinker and the object thought of, he does not speak of it as transcending the distinction between mind and matter, or (to keep closer to Spinoza's actual language) between Intelligence and Extension. Mr. Bradley has no doubt that the Absolute is experience, and he everywhere assumes that experience means conscious experience. If he will not call the Absolute 'Mind', he definitely calls it 'Spirit'. But I submit that he has no right to deny to the Absolute all the characteristics of consciousness as we know it—to deny to it the power of knowing either itself or anything else, and still to call it consciousness or experience. In justification of such a procedure, Mr. Bradley appeals to that lowest form of consciousness in which feeling is not yet differentiated from knowing, in which there is as yet no apprehended contrast between self and not-self, in which there is no distinction between logical subject and logical predicate. Of course he admits that this is a mere and a distant analogy: he admits that he does not know what such a not-knowing Consciousness is like. But I submit that the analogy does not help us. To point to the existence of a consciousness which is below knowing does not help us to understand, or without understanding to believe in, the existence of a consciousness which is above knowing, and yet (strange to say) includes knowing. Mr. Bradley admits that he can only supply us with an analogy. Yet he rejects the analogy of the self in thinking of the ultimate Reality, and falls back upon the analogy of a much lower kind of experience. He will urge of course that the self will not do, because it implies the contrast between self and not-self; and there we have relativity at once. But he does not escape the difficulty by treating the Absolute as a substance of which selves are attributes, as a substantive of which they are adjectives. For there too is relation. And if he pleads that here again this relation of substance to attribute is only intended as an analogy, I should submit that the analogy is a particularly misleading one. When we think of a substance, we necessarily think either of a permanent self with changing conscious states, or of a material thing with changing states known not to itself but to another mind. Mr. Bradley will not allow us to think of the Absolute after the analogy of a self: he therefore compels us practically to think of it after the analogy of a thing. Surreptitiously and unavowedly this is what he is doing when he talks of it as substance, or an 'it', and, if, for reasons the force of which the Idealist cannot deny, this substance is not to be identified with matter as we know it, the logical outcome of this line of thought would be

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much better met by frankly dropping the assertion that the Absolute is consciousness, and saying with Spinoza that it is a substance which is neither mind nor matter, and of which both consciousness and extension are but attributes. But this of course would be to give up all that Mr. Bradley has said about the Absolute being experience, spirit, and the like, to give up, in fact, all his Idealism.

At this point Mr. Bradley would probably be disposed to accuse me of having forgotten another side of his system. Has he not warned us, more and more emphatically as he approaches the end of his book, that after all we are not to take too seriously his language about the Absolute? The Absolute is not to be taken as if it were something apart from its appearances: the Absolute in fact exists only *in* its appearances. Now, I submit, that here we are introduced to a third theory of the Universe, distinct from and irreconcilable with either of the other two. If after all there is no Absolute other than the appearances, what becomes of the fundamental distinction between the Reality and its appearances? Either we must say that the appearances are the Reality, or we must say that there is no Absolute but only appearances. The difference between these two ways of putting the matter will not be great: in either case we have really adopted the third view which I have ventured to describe as Phenomenalism. Of course Mr. Bradley will protest that, though in a sense nothing exists but appearances, it is not *as* appearances that they constitute the Absolute. It is not as a simple collection that they are the Absolute, but as a Unity, as a system in which all have their place, and yet in which what is discordant or inconsistent in the appearances disappears. But still we cannot help asking what kind of existence has this Unity or system? If there is any mind for which it exists as a system, then it would seem that after all the Reality must be a Mind (or minds) which know the system, and can be distinguished from it, whatever difficulties may remain in understanding the character of its relation to other minds. In the earlier parts of 'Appearance and Reality' it would seem as if Mr. Bradley did on the whole believe that there is a mind or an experience in which all other minds or centres of consciousness were in some sense included and merged, and yet which was more than they. The Absolute, we are assured, is not merely One, not merely one system, but one experience, an eternal experience, an individual experience. If the Absolute 'perhaps strictly does not feel pleasure', 'that is only because it has something in which pleasure is included' (p. 534). Such statements imply consciousness and a consciousness distinguishable from each and every finite subject. It possesses a sense of humour of a



rather malicious type ; it can enjoy a practical joke.<sup>1</sup> But, as we go on, we meet with such utterances as these : ‘ Outside of finite experience there is neither a natural world nor any other world at all ’ (p. 279). ‘ The Absolute . . . has no assets beyond appearances ’ (p. 489). ‘ There is no reality at all anywhere except in appearance, and in our appearance we can discern the main nature of Reality ’ (p. 550). And in a recent article in *Mind* Mr. Bradley has asserted more unequivocally than ever that he does ‘ not believe in any reality outside of and apart from the totality of finite mind ’.<sup>2</sup> Now I submit that this is really a third view of Reality absolutely inconsistent with either of the two others—inconsistent with an inconsistency far more absolute and irreconcilable than he has ever alleged in the thinkings of poor common-sense, of ‘ popular ’ Philosophy, or of orthodox Theologies. It practically amounts to the assertion that the collective conscious experience of the Universe is the Reality. ‘ Yes,’ Mr. Bradley will reply, ‘ but not as such, not as a mere collection. For so considered they are inharmonious ; they contradict themselves ; and contradiction is the note of Unreality.’ But, I would insist, in what *Mind* or by what *Mind* is this process of reconciling and absorbing and removing the contradictions of Appearance performed ? ‘ By finite minds,’ he will reply, ‘ so far as men of Science at a lower level and Philosophers at a higher level actually succeed in performing this process.’ Since Mr. Bradley is (I suppose) the only Philosopher who has exco-  
 gitated exactly this conception of such an all-comprehensive and all-reconciling experience, the natural tendency of such a line of thought would be to make out that Mr. Bradley alone, or Mr. Bradley and his disciples, are the Absolute. But after all Mr. Bradley admits that no human mind or minds ever can perfectly and in detail perform this process of perfect reconciliation, absorption, removal of contradictions, transcending of relations.\* Then in what sense does an experience in which this remarkable feat is performed really exist ? To say that it exists and yet does not enter into any consciousness whatever involves a flat contradiction of all that Mr. Bradley has said against the possibility of Reality being a something which is not conscious, and of which no one is conscious. It is to give up the whole idealistic side of his teaching. If it exists neither in any consciousness nor out of any consciousness, it becomes a mere ideal of a kind of consciousness admitted to be unattainable, and it is absurd to describe such a non-existent as experience. The appearances as they appear—with all their contradictions and inconsistencies, except in so far as any finite Philosopher has succeeded in removing them—are left as the only reality.

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Mind*, N. S. vol. xvi (1907), p. 179.

Of course in Mr. Bradley's own writings these contradictions are disguised by many ingenious devices. The plausibility of his position consists in a see-saw between the two—or rather the three—views of Reality. When he exposes the difficulties of rival systems, his own system appears to escape them by the assurance that 'somehow' (Mr. Bradley's system might be described as the Philosophy of a 'Somehow'), all these contradictions are reconciled in the Absolute. When faced with the difficulty of a view which makes Reality consist in so strange an experience, an experience which does not know itself and yet in which all knowledge is absorbed, in which there is no relation or consciousness of relation and yet in which all relations have their being which includes all things and yet in which there is no plurality (for plurality is relation), then Mr. Bradley exhibits the other side of his shield and says, 'Oh, but this Absolute is only in the experiences: it is nothing apart from them or even beyond them'. But the two positions absolutely refuse to come together. We are assured that they come together somehow in the Absolute. But if our minds are to be allowed any power whatever of judging about the nature of the Reality, they cannot come together even in the Absolute. If Contradiction is the note of appearance or unreality, then Mr. Bradley's Absolute is itself the most unreal of all appearances, the greatest unreality in this world of shams. To tell us that all these distinctive, one-sided appearances may be harmonized in a complete experience might be intelligible; to say that they actually are harmonized in a consciousness and that that consciousness is the Reality might be intelligible. At least that might seem intelligible to some persons, though I personally could only admit the intelligibility in the sense in which one can admit the intelligibility of propositions which seem to one absurd. But to tell us that these self-contradictory appearances actually are such an harmonious and reconciling experience, while at the same time no consciousness exists except the self-contradictory appearances, is simply to require us to make an act of faith which cannot be made without such a sacrifice of the intellect as no religious fanatic or infallible Pontiff has ever demanded. If nothing is real but experience, <sup>as a totality, including</sup> a system of which no one is conscious cannot be Reality. If the unthought of, unexperienced system is Reality, Reality is something outside consciousness, and then on that view it is not true that 'Reality is experience'. Mr. Bradley has mistaken for Reality an ideal of knowledge—(an ideal towards which, as he contends, all our efforts to know point as to a goal, but which, according to his own admission, could not be attained, which does not exist in consciousness anywhere, and which (if it were attained) would cease to be knowledge.) ✓

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I shall now have the temerity to point out in a more positive way the fundamental mistake which, as it seems to me, lies at the bottom of Mr. Bradley's difficulties. I have nothing to say against that part of his argument which shows the impossibility of treating matter as by itself real. Of course matter has its own reality: it is only when it is taken out of its proper relation to consciousness that it becomes unreal. Its reality is that of actual or possible experience. To develop this fully would occupy much time. It is enough to say that here I am on common idealistic ground—the ground which, so far, Mr. Bradley shares with all thoroughgoing Idealists: nor have I any objection to enter against his criticism of the common Hegelian attempts to get rid of or practically to ignore the element which feeling undoubtedly contributes to the building up of what we call material things. It is this insistence in which I for one should discover Mr. Bradley's most conspicuous service to philosophical progress. But when we come to actual conscious experience, it seems to me that the suggestion that any such experience can be unreal is completely unmeaning. I recognize that that particular kind of mental experience which we call thought or knowledge is not all equally true. I have learned from Mr. Bradley the lesson that knowledge, though built up of perceptual material, is not the same thing as actual perception: it represents a manipulation, as it were, of our immediate experience. And our first efforts at this co-ordination are undoubtedly full of mistake, imperfection, one-sidedness, sometimes actual contradiction. It is the business of each successive stage in the development of thought to get rid of the inconsistency or one-sidedness in the preceding. It is undeniable, too, that our thought at least accomplishes this task only at the cost of getting in a sense away from the actual reality of things: it aims at representing what we perceive, but it only succeeds in doing this by leaving out much of the truth. Some of the incoherences and contradictions pointed out by Mr. Bradley may be really there. I will assume for the moment that they are all there. But, whatever may be said about the inadequate truth which can be claimed for that element in our consciousness which is called knowledge, nothing that may be said on this head can possibly affect its reality when considered simply as an actual conscious experience. No matter what manipulation some crude experience of ours may undergo before it passes into knowledge, the crude experience actually occurred before it was so manipulated. The raw material had, so to speak, as much reality as the finished article. Conscious states, as they are actually experienced, are perfectly real: knowledge and even false knowing or error are real. There may be degrees of Reality, if by that is meant that

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different kinds of consciousness possess different degrees of insight into their own natures or the nature of other knowable realities, or again in the sense that they may possess different degrees of value. But this is, on the whole, as it seems to me, a misleading way of speaking. In strictness the most passing thrill of immediate feeling is no less real than the highest moments of philosophic insight in the soul of a Plato. One state of mind may, considered as knowledge, come nearer the truth about Reality than another, but considered as so much psychical experience it is just so much and no more a part of Reality. Everything, as Professor Bosanquet has put it, is real, so long as it does not pretend to be anything but what it is. The unreality only comes in when it is taken by a knowing mind to be more or other than it is. And that is best expressed by saying that there are degrees of truth, but no degrees of Reality.

And from this there must follow a further consequence. All speculations about lower kinds of consciousness being swallowed up or combined in a higher kind of consciousness must be dismissed as involving unthinkable contradictions. I have for instance a certain experience on the strength of which I judge a sensation to be related to another sensation—related, say, in the way of posteriority. You may tell me that that notion is from the point of view of higher knowledge a mistake, for there can be no relations in reality, and the relation between the relative and its relation is unthinkable. Another mind, or my own at a later date, may see this sensation and relation transfigured into a unity in which the distinction between sensation and relation disappears. Let us assume that this may be the case. But that will not alter the fact that I made the mistake. The mental experience was just what it was, not something else. The mental experience of making a mistake can never be swallowed up or merged in an experience which involves no mistake: mental confusion is a reality which can never be transmuted into an experience in which all is clear, consistent, and 'harmonious'. An experience in which that distinction is 'transcended' is not the same experience as mine. 'Everything', as Bishop Butler put it, is 'what it is and not another thing.' I am bound to accuse Mr. Bradley of not having duly learned the simple lesson taught by this (in comparison with such thinkers as himself) simple-minded Georgian Bishop.

What then will be the effect of this contention, if admitted, upon our ultimate *Weltanschauung*? I do not deny that knowledge does postulate as its ideal a system of coherent truth, though many of the assumptions about the nature of this system are, I hold, quite gratuitous assumptions. The mere hypotheses that we make for the purposes of

scientific investigation or reasoning may be far from possessing that absolute and unvariable truthfulness which we erroneously attribute to them. But that the Universe must form, or that there is reason to believe that it does form, an ordered system of some kind, I fully admit—though philosophers are far too ready to make innumerable assumptions as to the nature of what is meant by order and system. Still, I should contend that we must not identify any fabric of coherent truth with Reality. Scientific knowledge exists as a fact in certain consciousnesses. There may exist a knowledge which surpasses in its completeness and coherence what we call knowledge as much as the knowledge of Science or Philosophy surpasses that of common, unanalysed, unreflecting experience. But quite equally, side by side with this knowledge, there exist unscientific knowledge, error, mistake, confusion; raw, crude, sensible experience. (All these must be included *i.e. Re must be included in the form* in the whole: no piece of conscious experience can ever be banished from the realm of reality, or ever become, for a mind that truly knows, other than it was. Complete knowledge would have to know what all this experience was, but without being it. To know what another thinks, or feels, or wills, or otherwise experiences, is not the same thing as to be or to have that experience. Reality then consists of all the actual conscious experience that there is, was, or will be. An experience in which contradictions and one-sidedness should have disappeared, or been swallowed up, or transformed into something else would not be the whole. A knowledge in which they appeared to be so transmuted could not be true knowledge of the whole.

But of course we cannot think of this world of experience simply as a succession of experiences. In our own conscious experience the successive moments of thought, emotion, perception present themselves as happening to a continuous, relatively permanent self: and we have reason to infer some similar, though inferior kind of connexion and continuity in the experience even of those inferior minds to which we cannot reasonably attribute self-consciousness as it exists in ourselves. Some degree of continuity is a matter of immediate experience in ourselves: and it is a necessity of thought to assume that any experience which begins to be must be regarded as ultimately an effect or product of a something which is permanent. The fleeting experience in time, though real, cannot be regarded as the whole of Reality. For our provisional account of the real as all the conscious experience of the Universe we must therefore substitute all the conscious beings that there are—not taken, of course, in abstraction from their successive

experiences but with those experiences. The real world is made up of conscious Spirits and their experiences. *(is not what is there to be enjoyed?)*

But of what sort are those Spirits, and how many are there? Can we think of the spirits of men and animals and similarly limited intelligences as constituting the ultimate Reality? It is an obvious necessity of thought that something must have existed from all eternity. We can as little treat a mere succession of temporary selves generating one another as being by themselves the whole Reality as a mere succession of experiences not united together and forming the experience of one and the same spirit. (Something must persist throughout that changes, some reality on which the changes are dependent.) Now if we assume on the ordinary idealistic grounds that nothing can possess in the fullest sense real and independent existence but conscious Spirits, the eternal Reality which is the source of all other Reality must be thought of as either one Spirit or many co-eternal spirits. The prima facie view of the matter is that spirits such as ours have not always existed. If they did, there is no reason to suppose that even between them they know the whole world which there was to be known. Geology tells us of a world which existed before us: even if we existed in some other state, there is no reason to assume that we formerly knew the geological history of their planet while that history was being enacted. Yet if that world existed, and the existence of material things implies experience, all of it must have entered in some way into the experience of one Spirit or more. All that has been said by Mr. Bradley and others as to the necessity of thinking that the world must form a coherent unity is in favour of supposing that the whole of it is known to one Mind, and is not merely the collective experience of many minds, each of which knows it in part, none of it as a whole.

If the world is to have any existence as a system or unity, it must exist in and for the experience of One Mind—one Mind at least. The hypothesis of a plurality of omniscient Minds is not, indeed, absolutely self-contradictory. Such a hypothesis might be dismissed as gratuitous, even if we thought of these Minds as merely knowing the world. But directly we introduce the idea of Will into our conception of the relation between the world and the minds whose experience it ultimately is, the hypothesis of two or more omniscient Minds becomes impossible. I have not time now to develop the argument that Causality or activity is intelligible only as the will of a Conscious being. My present hearers will of course know where that line of thought has been developed. I will only remind them in passing that Kant may now be numbered among the adherents of that view—

a view which involves the cancelling and suppression of two-thirds of his Critique and of much more that his disciples have based upon it.<sup>1</sup> I must be content here with saying that the unity, intercommunion, and system of the Universe prove that, if it was willed by Mind at all, it was willed by One Mind. The hypothesis of two or more minds which by their joint and completely concordant volitions continuously keep in being one and the same world of Nature and of other Spirits can hardly require serious refutation. It involves the hypothesis of a pre-established harmony which is not pre-established and which is harmonious only by accident. In the absence of such a grotesque alternative, we are driven to the view that Reality consists of all the Spirits that there are, among which only One is eternal and omniscient, and the source or ground of all the rest.

It will be obvious that I have now frankly taken leave of the definition of Reality adopted by Mr. Bradley himself. That definition seems to me an absolutely arbitrary one. This Reality which excludes all relation is after all the old 'One' of Parmenides, upon the emptiness and vanity of which all subsequent Philosophy has been a comment. An Absolute which excludes all relation is simply a One without a Many. (To talk about a One which somehow 'includes' many members without being related to any of them and without their being related to one another is simply to take back with one phrase what has been conceded by another.) Inclusion is after all for our thought a relation, and we have no other thoughts by which to think. The result of this quest has been what might have been anticipated. It has turned out that the One has no real existence except in so far as it is a name for the many considered in their mutual relations. Mr. Bradley's Absolute has turned out to be, as Green said of the search for a Real which was behind and independent of consciousness, simply that of which nothing can be said. Of course, if by Reality is meant the whole of Reality, such a Reality cannot have relation to anything outside itself: as to internal relations, there is no reason whatever for supposing that Reality, taken in its ordinary significance, involves any such exclusion.

Of course Mr. Bradley would reply that he has given reasons for holding that the notion of relativity involves incoherences and inconsistencies which we cannot suppose to belong to ultimately real things. The difficulty is one which would demand as elaborate an examination as Mr. Bradley has himself given it. Here I can but briefly urge two points. Firstly, I would submit that, even if he had succeeded in making good all—and even more than all—the contradictions which he has attempted to discover in our intellectual categories,

<sup>1</sup> James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 191.

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that would only go to show what I for one should never deny—that is to say, the inadequacy of our thoughts about Reality. Mr. Bradley admits that he is obliged to use these categories of human thought. His own theory of Reality depends for whatever plausibility it possesses upon a use of these categories. In so far as he does make any attempt at getting beyond them, he only involves himself in more and far more glaring contradictions than those which he seeks to avoid. Our modes of thought, when we are most consistent and when we seem to ourselves to be most reasonable, may be inadequate and imperfect modes of thinking; but we are not likely to get nearer the truth by indulging in what seems self-contradictory even to us. There may be unavoidable contradictions in our thought: that is a poor reason for introducing avoidable ones. That which seems absurd to us is not likely to seem less so to the Absolute. And therefore, even if we suppose that the idea of relation in general—or the relation of whole and part in particular—is inadequate to the nature of Reality, the idea of a relationless Reality or (what is the same thing) of a whole without any parts at all is likely to be still more so. Mr. Bradley's device of throwing all contradictions into the Absolute and pronouncing that they are somehow reconciled in and for the Absolute is just as much open to believers in another kind of Absolute. Indeed, an Absolute which is thought of as consisting in self-conscious Spirits—in many reproductions or imperfect incarnations of a single Self-consciousness which is also omniscient—would seem to be distinctly more capable of such feats than an Absolute which is correctly described by an 'it', whose maximum intelligence is represented, or (so far as Mr. Bradley's system goes) *may be* represented by such minds as ours, and which after all only exists in those admittedly self-contradictory appearances.

But secondly I must confess that the difficulties upon which Mr. Bradley insists with regard to relation do not much appeal to me. I do, indeed, recognize that the experience which is attributed to God cannot be exactly like our experience: there cannot be in it the same distinction between abstract knowledge on the one hand—based on that process of generalizing which, as Mr. Bradley has shown us, leaves out so much of the perceptual Reality—and actual sensation on the other, which as it approaches the state of pure sensation becomes increasingly exclusive of thought. 'Somehow', to use Mr. Bradley's favourite adverb, we must suppose that in God there is not this distinction between abstract knowledge and actual perception; so far I recognize the high value of Mr. Bradley's criticism upon the Hegelian attempt to make the thought of God, and so the reality of the world,



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identical with our system of abstract universals to the avowed or implied exclusion of all that wealth of actual perception to which these Universals owe all their content and all their claim to hold good of, or represent, Reality. But, if we cannot suppose that God's knowledge consists like ours in abstract universals, got by the clumsy process of generalizing from isolated perceptions, this is not because such knowledge implies relations but because it implies an advance from the unknown to the known, and so pre-supposes ignorance. Moreover, such knowledge, even when attained, fails to express the whole truth of actual perception: while actual perception, so long and so far as it is mere perception, does not know even itself. Such a distinction between the 'what' and the 'that' (as Mr. Bradley calls it) is impossible to an Omniscient Mind. (The experience of the divine Mind must somehow transcend this distinction between a thought which falls short of Reality and a reality which falls short of thought.) But I see no reason to believe that the element of Relation must disappear from such a consciousness, though for it relation may well become something other and more than it is for us. I cannot acknowledge the alleged self-contradictoriness of Relation. I do not see that, because we think of one sensation as related to another sensation, we therefore require a new relation to express the relation between the sensation and the relation, and so on *ad infinitum*. So to argue implies that we think of the relation as being an existence apart from that which is related, and that is inconsistent with the nature of a relation: just as, when with Plato—the Plato of certain dialogues or certain moments—we treat a universal as a real thing apart from its particulars, we are really taking away from it all that belongs to the nature of a universal, making it into a fresh particular, and exposing ourselves to the familiar *τρίτος άνθρωπος* criticism of Aristotle. A relation which itself wanted a relation to hook it on to its term would not be a relation at all. This difficulty—and many other difficulties of Mr. Bradley—seem to me simply to be created by the transparent device of taking ultimate notions, and demanding that they shall be explained. It is just like asking *why* two and two should make four, or asking *in what* consists the equality of the two angles at the base of an isosceles triangle, or demanding a definition of redness which shall explain the notion to a man blind from his birth, or insisting that, if one part of space is connected with the adjoining part, there must be a link to connect them which we must be able to isolate from the adjoining space and hand round for inspection. There must be a limit to all explanation, and when we have analysed the objects of

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perception into a sensuous content and certain intellectual relations, we have reached that limit. I do not deny that an omniscient mind may know more about the matter than we do; but even in relations as we know them there is no contradiction.

Among the many consequences which follow from the rejection of Mr. Bradley's views about relation, there is one which calls in our present connexion for special notice. (If relatedness or two-ness is not a mark of unreality, there is no reason why we should assume that in the Absolute the distinction between subject and object must altogether disappear.) No doubt we can look upon the subject or subjects and the nature which they know as together constituting a single Reality. If the word Absolute is to be used at all, we must say that the Absolute includes the subject or subjects together with the Nature which is, in the most ultimate analysis, the experience of those subjects. In so far as subject and object are each of them unreal and unintelligible without the other, we may no doubt, if we like, speak of a 'higher Unity' which transcends the distinction; but we must not think of this higher Unity as a special and different Being with a nature or characteristics of its own distinct from the nature of subject and object considered as related to and implying each other. A further consequence of rejecting Mr. Bradley's Anti-relationism will be that we shall have cut away all ground for treating the distinction between one self and another—between one human self and another, or between any human self and that divine Self which we have seen to be logically implied in the existence of the world—as in any way an unreal distinction which has got to be merged and transcended in the Absolute. And this will avoid some of the outrageous positions to which Mr. Bradley would commit us. An omniscient experience which should include in itself experiences which are not omniscient involves a contradiction. And we are told that in the Absolute there must be no contradiction. An omniscient Being could not have the particular experience which consists in not being omniscient. He might know what such a limited experience is, but it would not be his experience or be known as such.

While we recognize the differences between thought, feeling, experience and all other words expressive of consciousness as they are for and in God from what they are in ourselves, while we admit that, in the scholastic phrase, such expressions are used *sensu eminentiori*, we need not make the difference to be so great as is implied in the assertion that in the divine experience all distinction between subject and object disappears—a mode of representation which is apt to end in a virtual evaporation of all real meaning in the assertion that God is Spirit or

Mind, and to embark upon the road by which a nominal Idealism so often descends into the virtual Naturalism of Spinoza. At the same time we shall be able to avoid what seems to me the excessive subjectivism of Mr. Bradley's extremest idealistic utterances. If relation is not to be expelled from Reality, we need no more merge the object in the subject than the subject in the object. I do not reject Mr. Bradley's phrase 'nothing exists but experience', but the phrase, taken by itself and still more when taken in connexion with Mr. Bradley's attitude towards relations, may easily be taken to mean that it is an experience in which all distinction between a consciousness of objects in space and non-spacial experiences such as emotions (though after all even these are vaguely localized) is altogether lost and denied. We need not deny the reality of things because we assert they could not exist apart from consciousness.

A certain community of Nature we must, again, recognize between God and all lesser spirits, a community great in proportion to the level of each spirit's capacities and achievements. But community is not identity. The Unity that we are in search of does not exclude differences. All the Spirits together no doubt make a single Reality, but the unity which they possess is not the particular kind of Unity which we recognize in ourselves as constituting self-consciousness or personality. God may no doubt reasonably be supposed to possess that Unity in Himself carried to a degree of which personality in us gives us only a glimpse. But to distinguish oneself from other Spirits, however fully one may know them, is not (as some people seem to imagine) an imperfection or (in any derogatory sense) a limitation, but, on the contrary, a note of the highest level to which Being can attain. It represents an ideal, to which other consciousnesses approximate in proportion to their intellectual elevation, and to which the nearest approach known to us is constituted by the human intelligence at its highest.

I have passed over a host of difficulties. A host of the alleged difficulties, contradictions, and incoherences in human knowledge have been left unexamined. I can only say here that some of them appear to me to be imaginary, others greatly exaggerated; while others remain real and undeniable, and consequently set a limit to the completeness and adequacy of our knowledge, though they do not, as it seems to me, involve the inferences which Mr. Bradley draws from them.

These matters I must pass over, but there is one of these alleged contradictions about which a word must be said even in the most summary criticism of Mr. Bradley's position. Green's timeless

individual self he has dismissed in a contemptuous paragraph : he still believes in a timeless Absolute. I am far from denying that there are antinomies involved in our ideas of time, and I do not believe that any thinker has ever transcended them : certainly they are not transcended by merely saying 'Let them be reconciled where all other contradictions are reconciled—in the Absolute'. But the contradictions are not as great as Mr. Bradley makes them. The mere fact that time involves relativity and therefore multiplicity does not involve the reduction of time to the level of appearance. With the rejection of the notion that relativity is equivalent to unreality, we shall have got rid of one of Mr. Bradley's main reasons for treating time as unreal. But there remains the fundamental antinomy—the impossibility of believing either in a first event or in an infinite series of real events. This does not warrant our calling time unreal. Empty time is of course unreal, but temporality enters into all our experience, and is an element in our experience as real as anything we know or can conceive. To talk of God or of the Absolute or ultimate Reality as timeless is to use language which can mean nothing to us, or rather language which is certainly false. Whatever be the true solution of the difficulties involved in the nature of time, we shall not diminish them by denying the reality of an element in actual experience which is as real as any other element in the most real thing we know or can conceive.

I will not develop these considerations any further, for two reasons. In the first place the question of time is the most difficult question of Metaphysics, and any approach to a serious criticism of Mr. Bradley's treatment of it would be wholly beyond the limits which I have designed for this paper. And in the second place much has already been done in the way of protest against the cheap and easy attempts to transcend the time-antinomy which were in vogue not many years ago. Without mentioning others, it will be enough to say that I recognize this as one of the most permanent and valuable elements in the philosophy of M. Bergson. Whatever becomes of his system as a whole, M. Bergson's insistence on the reality of experience as seen from the inside, and on change and temporality as inherent elements in that reality, has I think, supplied just the criticism which Mr. Bradley's attitude towards time demands, although there may be not an equal insistence on the complementary principle that change implies something permanent.

I have no disposition to deny the reality or the gravity of some of the difficulties about time, but the moral which I should draw from them is different from Mr. Bradley's. The general conclusion of his whole argument is that, though everything is appearance, yet 'in our

appearance we can discover the main nature of reality'. If it were true that the Absolute is out of time, while the appearances are all in time, it certainly could not be said that we could discover the main nature of Reality from the appearances. The difference between an existence in time and an existence out of time is so fundamental, so abysmal, that it is difficult to say what the one could have in common with the other. Mr. Bradley is, as it appears to me, too sceptical in his premisses, much too dogmatic in his conclusions. He is too sceptical about the validity of our knowledge in its parts; he is too unwarrantably confident and dogmatic in his assertions about the Universe as a whole. The difficulties which he insists upon about time do not warrant the assertion that the Absolute is out of time, or that time-distinctions are purely subjective or in any sense unreal. But they do warrant the assertion that we do not and cannot understand fully the nature of time, and consequently cannot fully understand the nature of ultimate Reality. Till this difficulty is removed, the pretentious systems, Hegelian or other, which profess to explain all difficulties and to give full and complete insight into the ultimate nature of things are doomed to failure. But I believe it is possible to show that a system which takes time and things in time as we find them and treats them, notwithstanding the difficulties, as real and objective is in all probability nearer the reality than any of those which ignore or pretend to explain them away—nearer the absolute truth speculatively and still more so when treated as imperfect and inadequate representations of Reality for the purposes of life and practice.

There are aspects of Mr. Bradley's chameleon-like system which would enable it to be represented as merely amounting to such an assertion of the inadequacy of a knowledge which is nevertheless sufficient to supply us with guidance through life. Much in it might fit in with a system of thought which accepted the primacy of the Practical Reason. But his distrust of the Moral Consciousness prevents our looking at it in this light. That is precluded by his admission that we have to assume in practice moral distinctions which we know speculatively to be not only inadequate but false. For one who believes that our moral consciousness gives us the fullest glimpses of insight into the nature of Reality that we possess, the mere fact that his system condemns us to adopt this attitude of ethical scepticism, supplies by itself a considerable presumption against its speculative truth.

The question of time is not the only direction in which I recognize that Mr. Bradley has performed good service in pointing out the inadequacy of our knowledge, and undermining the philosophies which

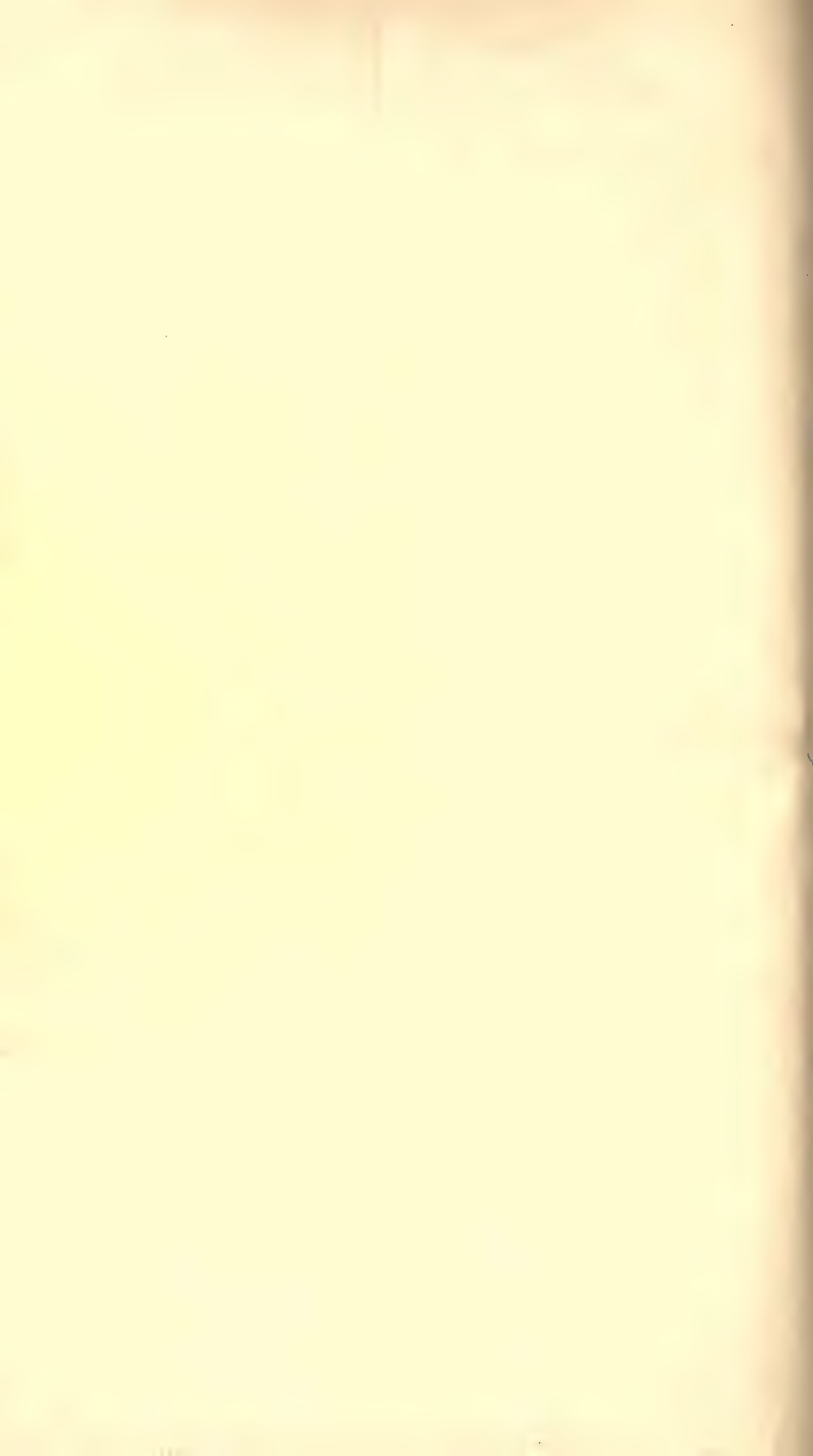
tend to conceal this fact by substituting imposing rhetoric for thought. There is at least some truth in Mr. Bradley's doctrine that in a sense we cannot know anything perfectly without knowing the whole. It is, as it seems to me, an exaggeration to say that this implies that all our knowledge is partial error: for sometimes—as for instance in Arithmetic and Geometry—we can see immediately that all further knowledge must be irrelevant to the accuracy of the particular truth which we grasp when we pronounce, for instance, that two and two make four. In mathematics abstraction is so complete that we know that here abstraction involves no error. But that is decreasingly the case as Science becomes more concrete, and the maxim attains its maximum truth as the highest objects of knowledge are reached. Above all, with regard to our knowledge of God, it is most undoubtedly true that our knowledge must be inadequate, that nothing short of complete knowledge of the Universe and every part of it could give us complete and adequate knowledge, and here it may well be true that every proposition that we can lay down may be to some extent infected with error on account of the inadequate and partial character of our knowledge. Here we have no immediate knowledge that what we know not could not modify the inferences that we draw from what we do know. Our knowledge may be sufficient for practical guidance—not merely for actual conduct, but also for religious emotion, and faith, and aspiration. If Pragmatism would only limit itself to insisting upon this inadequacy, and upon the importance of the knowledge which guides life as compared with mere speculation, instead of substituting wilful caprice for the use of our Reason up to the point to which its powers enable us to penetrate, I could recognize its influence on Philosophy as a wholesome one: but, because our brightest guide through the darkness of this world is but a rushlight, that seems to me a poor reason for blowing it out, and insisting on walking blindly and unnecessarily in the dark.

Whether our knowledge is sufficient for practical guidance and for the support of those religious beliefs and aspirations which so powerfully influence practice, depends mainly upon the confidence which we repose in the Practical Reason. Perhaps in order that this paper may not be more incomplete than it is I may be allowed briefly to repeat the criticism which I have elsewhere elaborated. I believe it to be possible to show that Mr. Bradley's discovery of a fundamental contradiction in our practical Reason is a sheer *ignis fatuus*. Our moral consciousness does not say that all self-development and all self-sacrifice are right (that would be a contradiction): it does not even say that *all* self-development and *all* self-sacrifice are good; though, if it

did, there would be no contradiction there.<sup>1</sup> It does tell us that *some* self-contradiction and *some* self-sacrifice are good, and (difficult of course as such questions are in practice) it is not unequal to the task of balancing one good against another, and of seeking to realize an ideal of human life in which both self-development and self-sacrifice shall have their due and proper place. It is always right to aim at the greatest good ; though there is no contradiction in saying that one good can sometimes only be attained by the sacrifice of another. And if our Practical Reason involves no such contradiction, there is no ground for distrusting it, any more than for distrusting our scientific reasoning, in spite of the obvious fallibility of any particular individual mind, and the inadequacy of all human knowledge. If our moral consciousness is not to be trusted, we have no right to use moral categories at all in our theory of the Universe, and Mr. Bradley has no right to say that good is an attribute of the real while evil is merely appearance. If our judgements of value are to be trusted, we have no reason for doubting that for the Mind and Will which is the source of all Reality this ideal is as valid as for us. There is no reason for attributing to God a different Morality (as regards its fundamental principles) than that which we recognize as applicable to human conduct, any more than for supposing that for God quantity and number are essentially different from that recognized by the purely human affair which we call Arithmetic.

And if our moral consciousness is to be trusted as an inadequate revelation of the Divine—two things must follow. Firstly, we may and must think of the divine Will as morally good, and directed towards the greatest attainable realization of what presents itself to the Moral Consciousness as the highest good. Secondly, we cannot think of a Universe in which our Moral Consciousness pronounces that there is much evil as perfectly good. The evil exists, though (if our moral ideas contain any revelation of the divine) it can only exist for the sake of the good. The series of events which make up the world's history is directed towards the good. But the good is not fully realized yet. How much good is destined to be realized, we cannot tell. Enough for us to know two things : (1) that enough good will be realized to justify its being willed by a righteous and all-wise Mind, (2) that our co-operation is required in realizing it. And this is all that is necessary to justify religious faith and to inspire moral effort.

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with this point at length in my *Theory of Good and Evil*, II. 85 sq., 268 sq.







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